

It's time to tackle child poverty in our migrant communities

Welcome to this special migration-themed issue of *Poverty*.

Migrants – refugees seeking safety, families wanting to be reunited and people coming to the UK to work or study – have contributed enormously to our social, cultural and economic life over the years. Although many quickly establish themselves, some face real hardship. Their children are a key group at risk of poverty.

During the past two years, funding from the Trust for London, a charitable trust focused on poverty and inequality in London, has allowed CPAG to highlight the disadvantages migrant children face and to maximise migrant families' income, by ensuring frontline advisers have access to accurate and up-to-date information.

CPAG's new *Benefits for Migrants Handbook*, in particular, will be welcomed by advisers because, as Nadine Clarkson and Lara ten Caten point out in this issue, migrants already face considerable challenges securing their existing basic rights.

Peter Aspinall highlights the problems vulnerable refugee children have in getting healthcare, despite the well-known mental and physical health problems associated with persecution, dislocation and detention. And Sean Bamford of the TUC reminds us that the lack of employment rights and protection for migrant workers leave many poorly paid and vulnerable to exploitation.

As well as securing existing rights, CPAG has been working to ensure that the government's child poverty strategy addresses the needs of children of migrants. Ending child poverty by 2020 requires tackling child poverty in migrant families. Jill Rutter writes that this must involve recognising that many of the issues migrants face, such as finding work and childcare, affect many other families too. But, she adds, it also means tackling migrant-specific issues, such as language barriers and the absence of support networks.

One of the key challenges for campaigners is that, as Ilona Pinter points out, many of these children are missing from the child poverty debate. This may owe much to the lack of political power these communities have, but it also reflects the fact that they do not feature in official poverty data.

The government claims it wants to prioritise the most vulnerable children, but to do that it has to recognise the essential truth that the children of migrants are, and will always be, part of our communities. A child poverty strategy that ignores this group would be missing a key dimension. The politics of immigration and welfare are undoubtedly difficult, if not occasionally toxic, but the arguments for ending child poverty for *all* children in our communities have overwhelming moral force and make economic sense. ■

We are grateful for the financial support of the Trust for London.



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Poverty is the policy journal of the Child Poverty Action Group. It aims to carry articles and features that will inform, stimulate and develop the debate on the nature and causes of poverty in its various forms and on the action required, especially by governments, to relieve and ultimately prevent it. Our objective is to publish material that achieves a high standard of analysis, without sacrificing clarity or accessibility, to specialist and non-specialist alike.

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